

Prophetic Significance of Israel's Dispersion

Tom's Perspectives
by Thomas Ice

Many who study prophecy are well aware of the predictions fulfilled by Christ at His coming. Those who study prophetic events destined for the future like the rapture, the tribulation and the many events associated with it, the second coming, and the millennial reign of Christ are usually informed in detail about these things. However, many of us are usually not knowledgeable about how Bible prophecy has and is being fulfilled in regards to the course of Israel's destiny during her current dispersion among the nations. There are specific prophecies that provide a general overview of Israel's diaspora.

ISRAEL'S CURRENT SITUATION

First, I must note that Israel's current dispersion among the nations (that is "The Diaspora") began after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. There was another revolt against Rome led by Simon bar Kokhba, who was thought to be the Jewish Messiah from A.D. 132–136. Roman Emperor Hadrian put down this revolt in which he totally leveled Jerusalem and further scattered the Jews in A.D. 135. As a result, all but a handful of Jewish communities have lived in the Land of Israel until the beginning of the modern return to the Land in the 1880s. It is during the time of The Diaspora that Jews have been fulfilling specific prophecies relating to their overall destiny.

Please keep in mind that I take no delight in talking about these prophecies at all because of the great love that I have for God's chosen people. Nevertheless, it is a sad part of God's prophesied plan for His people and provides further prophetic proof of the veracity of God's Word.

It appears to me at this point in history that we are still see a majority of Israel in The Diaspora, but at the same time we also see the biblically prophesied regathering of the Jewish people to their land in unbelief when Israel became a nation in 1948 (Ezek. 20:33–38; 22:17–22; 36:22–24; Isa. 11:11–12; Zeph. 2:1–2). Thus, we are still in the Church Age when God's work takes place through His Church, but, at the same time, He is regathering His people back to the land in preparation for the Church's absence and the ensuing events of the tribulation. So The Diaspora is still in effect.

DIASPORA PROPHECY

The book of Deuteronomy is the Lord's second giving of the Law and was designed to function as Israel's constitution by which they were to live unto the Lord when they went into the Promised Land. The Lord promises blessing in the land if Israel obeys Him (Deut. 28:1–14), however, if they do not obey Him, then the Lord will bring curses against the nation (Deut. 28:15–68). Deuteronomy 28:58–68, a section at the end of the blessing and cursing portion that describes Israel's second dispersion. Their first dispersion is noted in verses 49–57, which describes "a nation" (Babylon) that the Lord will use to discipline the nation by deportation. However, verses 58–68 describe the second dispersion, in which "The LORD will scatter you among all peoples." This clearly refers to the Roman period invasions and dispersions. In fact, verse 68 says, "The LORD will bring

you back to Egypt in ships . . . And there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.” The *MacArthur Study Bible* says, “But it is true that after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which was a judgment on the apostasy of Israel and their rejection and execution of the Messiah, this prophecy was actually fulfilled. The Roman general Titus, who conquered Jerusalem and Israel, sent 17,000 adult Jews to Egypt to perform hard labor there and had those who were under 17 years old publicly sold. Under the Roman emperor Hadrian, countless Jews were sold and suffered such bondage and cruelty.”¹

DESCRIPTION OF ISRAEL’S DIASPORA

The following description lays out key points about the last 2,000 years of Jewish history:

- “you shall be left few in number” (verse 62)
- “you shall be torn from the land” (verse 63)
- “the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth” (verse 64)
- “there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known” (verse 64)
- “among those nations you shall find no rest” (verse 65)
- “there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot” (verse 65)
- “there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul” (verse 65)
- “your life shall hang in doubt before you” (verse 66)
- “you shall be in dread night and day” (verse 66)
- “you shall have no assurance of your life” (verse 66)
- “In the morning you shall say, ‘Would that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say ‘Would that it were morning!’ because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see.” (verse 6)

These passages provide a descriptive overview of what the global Jewish dispersion would be like. Unfortunately for the Jewish people, that is what has transpired. We are familiar with the Holocaust and the many pogroms that the Jewish people have suffered down through the years. The material in Deuteronomy was given to the nation of Israel at the close of the Exodus period, right before they went into the land of Israel about 3,500 years ago. There is no doubt that this prophetic description was given hundreds of years before it transpired. These are prophecies that have been literally fulfilled and provide evidence of the veracity of Scripture. People need to listen when God speaks!

THE LEVITICUS PERSPECTIVE

Leviticus 26 provides another blessing and cursing section concerning the nation of Israel. Leviticus 26 provides for cycles of blessing and cursing. Obedience brings blessing and more obedience brings more blessing (Lev. 26:1–13). However, disobedience brings cursing and continued disobedience brings more cursing, until finally the nation is cast out of their land as described in Deuteronomy and throughout many of Israel’s Prophets.

Even in the worse case scenario, which is what has happened to the nation of Israel, the Lord says the following: “Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy

them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the Land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God, I am the Lord” (Lev. 26:44–45). This is a direct statement against those in the Church today who say that because of Israel’s disobedience they have lost their calling as God’s chosen people, that they have somehow been disinherited and replaced once and for all by the Church. No! A thousand times “no”! The Lord said, “I will not reject them.” Notice in the same context the Lord said He would not break His covenant with the nation. So the Bible itself says for God to disinherit Israel and her land would be an act of breaking His covenant with them.

ISRAEL A WASTELAND

Another statement in Leviticus 26 is a promise that when Israel is out of their land it will become a wasteland. “And I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled over it. You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste” (Lev. 26:32–33). Of course this is exactly what has happened during the bulk of the Diaspora. It is said that in 1882 that there were only 24,000 people in the entire land of Israel when the first movement of Jewish return to the land began.² Mark Twain wrote about his travels throughout Israel in 1868 in *The Innocents Abroad*. He spoke of how it was a vacant land in which he traveled for three days through it and never saw another individual.

It appears to me that God largely kept Israel from others coming and living in it while the Jews were outside the Land. But when the Jews began to return to the land, they were able to turn it into the productive piece of real estate that it has become in our own day. This is the fulfillment in our own day of Bible prophecy. When the Jews first came to the Land 3,500 years ago it was said to be a land of milk and honey. In other words, a very productive land. However, when they are out of the land, others have never seen anything other than a wasteland. As the Bible predicted, it would only prosper when the Jews were in the land.

CONCLUSION

We see that God is fulfilling and continuing to fulfill Bible prophecy via His prophecies about what would happen to the Jewish people when scattered throughout the entire world during what we call the Diaspora. A majority of Jewish people are still outside the Land of Israel, living in the Diaspora. While Israel’s return to their land is ongoing, so is the Diaspora. We are living during a time of transition in which the Diaspora is winding down and the return of the Jewish people is ramping up in preparation for the prophesied events of the tribulation that will culminate in the conversion of the nation of Israel and the second coming. Even today we see God’s prophetic Scripture moving forward. This should cause us to live for Him, preach the gospel, while waiting for His return for the Church. Are you ready? Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ John MacArthur, Editor, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997), p. 291.

² Charles L. Feinberg, *Israel At the Center of History and Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 3rd edition, 1980), p. 164.